WILDSTORM UNIVERSE

#10
May

Suggested
For Mature
Readers

# sleeper™

season two

ED BRUBAKER
SEAN PHILLIPS

Wildstorm.com

# Good Offenses

LYNCH...?

YOU WITH ME HERE?

YES... JUST LETTING IT SINK IN.

YOU KNOW WHAT THIS ***MEANS,*** DON'T YOU, SLAYTON?

YEAH, MEANS OUR OLD ***FRIEND*** IS ONE OF TAO'S FUCKIN' FINGER PUPPETS.

BUT YOU'VE BEEN SITTING ON THIS INTEL NEARLY A ***WEEK...*** SO, THE QUESTION IS, WHAT'RE WE GONNA ***DO*** ABOUT IT?

WELL, I DON'T THINK WE'VE GOT MUCH ***CHOICE*** ABOUT THAT.

IN OTHER WORDS, YOU CAN'T THINK OF A WAY TO TURN COLE ***BACK*** ON THE BASTARD YET...

NO...NOT UNTIL I KNOW MORE...

TWO DAYS LATER...

I SUPPOSE YOU EXPECT ME TO *THANK YOU?*

THAT WOULD BE THE *NORMAL* RESPONSE...

...I MEAN, I *DID* TIP YOU THAT ONE OF YOUR ONLY *FRIENDS* WAS GOING TO KILL YOU.

YES, AND AT THE SAME TIME, YOU *COMPROMISED* YOUR OWN MISSION.

A MISSION THAT WOULD HAVE NO *PURPOSE* IF YOU TOOK ANOTHER BULLET TO THE HEAD.

AND WHEN DID OUR ROLES *REVERSE,* HOLDEN?

LAST TIME I LOOKED, I WAS MORE THAN CAPABLE OF PROTECTING MYSELF. YOUR MISSION IS--

HEY, *FUCK YOU!*

LAST TIME *I* LOOKED YOU WERE GETTING KNOCKED INTO A *COMA* AND LEAVING ME IN *DEEP COVER* ON MY OWN!

NOW YOU DANGLE SOME *HOPE* IN FRONT OF ME, AND I'M JUST SUPPOSED TO LET THE SAME GUY WHO TOOK YOU OUT *LAST TIME* HAVE ANOTHER RUN AT YOU? RIGHT...

FORGIVE ME IF I FEEL THE NEED TO WATCH MY *OWN* ASS THIS TIME AROUND.

A LOT OF MY MEN *DIED* TODAY TO COVER YOUR ASS, AGENT.

YEAH, WELL, DON'T GO GETTING ALL *SENTIMENTAL* ON ME ALL OF A SUDDEN. YOU WERE *ALWAYS* WILLING TO SACRIFICE LIVES.

SO, HOW *DID IT* GO DOWN?

WE DIDN'T WANT TAO FIGURING OUT WE'D BEEN WARNED, DIDN'T WANT HIM LOOKING AT YOU LIKE THAT...

"... SO I DID WHAT I COULD TO MAKE IT LOOK LIKE GRIFTER HAD GONE ACTIVE ON HIS OWN...

"... AND I TRIED TO MAKE IT BIG, SO EVERYONE IN THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY WOULD BE TALKING ABOUT IT ALL WEEK."

HELL WAS *THAT?* SOMEONE JUST HIT US WITH A *ROCKET-LAUNCHER?*

"OF COURSE, TO COLE, IT JUST LOOKED LIKE HIS OWN PEOPLE HAD SUDDENLY TURNED AGAINST HIM FOR NO REASON."

WHAT THE *FUCK?!* HEY--

*TAKE HIM!*

*GO! GO! GO!*

DON'T MAKE A GODDAMN MOVE!

SON, YOU BETTER STOP POINTING THAT FUCKING RIFLE AT ME.

IF HE EVEN *BREATHES,* AIR HIM OUT.

OH, THE HELL WITH *THIS* SHIT...

YAUUGGGHH!

TAKE HIM OUT! TAKE HIM--

AHHHH!

KKRAK

...UNH... UHN...

WHY DID YOU DO THIS? ON *WHOSE* ORDERS?

...C-C-COMMANDER LYNCH...SAID TO TAKE...Y-YOU INT-T-TO CUSTODY...

*WHAT?* LYNCH--

AGHHHHHH!!!

I'M SORRY TO HAVE TO GO DIGGING AROUND IN YOUR HEAD LIKE THIS, COLE...BUT IT HAS TO BE DONE...

YOU *HAVE* TO REMEMBER.

...NO... LYNCH... WHAT'D YOU--I DIDN'T...GET OUT OF--

I'VE *ALMOST* GOT IT...IT'S ALMOST OVER...

...WAIT-- WAIT--DON'T DO-- WAIT--I DON'T WANT TO--

THERE WE GO...

...OH GOD... WHAT DID I DO...?

SO, HE REMEMBERS *EVERYTHING?*

UNFORTUNATELY, YES...THERE WAS NO OTHER WAY TO GO ABOUT FREEING HIS MIND.

BUT HE'S PUNISHING HIMSELF PRETTY *BADLY* NOW.

I KNOW THE FEELING.

I'M SURE YOU DO.

SO, EVEN WITH OUR COVER-UP YOU COULD STILL BE IN A PRETTY TIGHT SPOT WITH TAO.

WE'VE *ALREADY* MOVED OUR TIMETABLE UP CONSIDERABLY...DO YOU HAVE ANY *OTHER* CLEVER IDEAS ON HOW WE'RE GOING TO MAKE THIS WORK?

ACTUALLY, YEAH, I DO...

And as simple as that, it's all set into motion, the ENDGAME.

Lynch and Tao's... but mine, too.

I'd probably feel anxious or excited if I COULD... but then, if I could, I'd never have gotten to this place to begin with.

Or would I?

I've come so far from who I was all those years ago that it's hard to remember...

...but I have a feeling I was just young enough, and just enough of a soldier and true believer that Lynch might've been able to talk me into a job like this anyway.

BEEP DEEP DEEP DEEP

Funny then, AND sad, that he had to force me into it, instead, just to be sure.

YEAH, WHAT'S UP?

BIG NEWS. THEY'RE SCUTTLING THE NEW YORK BASE AS WE SPEAK.

IT LOOKS LIKE OUR FRIEND THE GRIFTER CAUSED A ***MAJOR*** SCENE AT I.O. TODAY. APPARENTLY HE NEARLY BLEW THE ROOF OFF THE FUCKING PLACE.

IS THAT HOW TAO HEARD IT WENT DOWN?

*WHICH I'M ASSUMING MEANS THAT'S NOT HOW IT DID?*

THAT'D BE A ***SAFE*** ASSUMPTION.

SO, WHAT'S THE SITUATION, OFFICIALLY?

WELL, OUR SOURCE SAYS THAT GRIFTER WAS TAKEN ALIVE BUT THAT LYNCH WAS PRETTY SEVERELY ***WOUNDED...***

IN ANY CASE, TAO FEELS THE BASE HAS BEEN COMPROMISED OR THAT IT WILL BE ***SOON,*** SO WE'RE SHUTTING DOWN, MOVING THE WHOLE OPERATION.

I'M SUPPOSED TO FIND YOU AND BRING YOU TO THE NEW LOCATION.

RIGHT... WHERE DO YOU WANNA MEET?

THE BROOKLYN SAFEHOUSE.

RIGHT, SEEYA THERE.

*Nice one, Lynch...making it look like Grifter almost took you out.*

*I wonder how long Tao will buy it?*

But then, when I think about it, I wonder if he bought it at all...

For a dark moment I wonder if he bought ANYTHING we've tried to pull, or if he's just having a laugh at all our expenses.

But I push that thought out of my head... it's too late for doubt.

It's too late for anything but this one last gamble.

And strangely, before it all begins, I have this moment of PEACE. And it starts on the subway, of all places...but still, it's peace.

Maybe it's because it's all out of my hands now. I don't know...

But suddenly I'm not thinking about all the risks. I'm not mad at Tao or Lynch or anybody...I'm not even worried about Miss Misery and the target I might've put on her...

I just let the train jostle me around...

...And then I look at the stars on the other side of the river for a few minutes...wondering how LONG it's been since I looked at the stars.

But, like I said, it's just a MOMENT...

And it fades with each step I take up the stairwell in the Brooklyn safehouse, where Gretchen--Miss Misery--waits on the seventh floor.

And by the time she opens the door, I'm as far from peace as I've probably ever been...

Judging by her actions, she's feeling much the same.

She tears into me like it's my last night on shore leave and she knows something I don't...

Like I'm leaving for college the next day without her...

Like my wife is coming home from that cruise to Alaska with the kids...

It's that almost desperate last-time sex...and it surprises me...

Surprises me that I'm seeing it in her eyes...

And surprises me to know that sudden desperation in myself...

I don't really think it's the last time, but my body and mind aren't so sure...

...they want to remember all the curves and scars and everything wicked and beautiful...

And then I get it. This isn't last-time sex.

This is everything-could-fall-apart-at-any-moment sex...

And then, it does...

YAAAUGGHHH!

Peter Grimm's touch...not the first time I've experienced it. This time I get a scream out before the air sucks out of me.

Then it's like I'm going insane at the speed of sound...all my fears and memories folding on top of me, crushing.

How does he DO this? How is it that the one person who hates me most of all is the only one who can really touch me?

I HOPED IT WOULD COME TO THIS SOMEDAY... SERIOUSLY.

I TOLD TAO OVER AND OVER AGAIN THAT HE COULDN'T *TRUST* YOU...ALL HE DID WAS SMILE AT ME.

BUT YOU KNOW WHAT I THINK, CARVER? I THINK HE KNEW ALL ALONG YOU'D GO RUNNING BACK TO MOMMY FIRST CHANCE YOU GOT...

I THINK HE'S JUST BEEN WAITING AND WATCHING YOU...YOU'RE JUST A FLY IN HIS WEB.

I'm going to pass out... starting to have trouble hearing his taunts...

How many times have I seen him do this to others?

He can leave me like this-- a tape-loop of terror until my brain commits suicide to shut it off.

God, no...not now...I'm so close. There has to be a way out...

HE'S LOSING IT, ISN'T HE? CAN YOU DIAL IT BACK A LITTLE? I WANT HIM TO HEAR WHAT I'VE GOT TO SAY...

HOW ABOUT WE LEAVE HIM LIKE THIS AND SEE IF HE DIES *WATCHING* US?

DON'T BE AN IDIOT... TAO WANTS HIM ALIVE.

LET'S DEAL WITH WHAT *I* WANT FOR A CHANGE.

DON'T TELL ME *THIS* DOESN'T DO IT FOR YOU? GETTING OFF WHILE HE'S WRITHING IN AGONY?

YOU'RE A PIG, PETER... I *LIKE* THAT ABOUT YOU.

BUT... WHAT GOOD IS IT IF HE CAN'T *UNDERSTAND* WHAT HE'S SEEING?

FINE... THERE.

HHHUKK--

*And suddenly it's not as bad... I can breath again, I can hear... but it's not over...*

*Now the images around me are just as bad as the ones I'm seeing in my head...*

CAN YOU *HEAR* ME NOW, YOU STUPID BASTARD?

OH YEAH, YOU CAN... I CAN SEE IT IN YOUR *EYES*...

DID YOU *REALLY* THINK I'D GO ALONG WITH YOU?

DID YOU NOT KNOW ME AT ALL, EVER?

I TOLD YOU NOT TO TRUST ME, FOOL.

BUT ALL YOU COULD DO WAS PUT YOUR DICK INSIDE ME AND PRETEND IT MEANT SOMETHING...

DO YOU KNOW HOW *PATHETIC* THAT IS?

AND NOW TAO IS GOING TO GET HIS HOOKS INTO YOU DEEPER THAN HE EVER HAS, AND WHEN HE'S DONE...YOU KNOW WHAT?

*UNNHHH... UHHH--*

I'M GOING TO FUCK YOU *AGAIN,* JUST FOR THE FUN OF IT...AND YOU'RE GOING TO BE STUPID ENOUGH TO LET ME...

YOU'RE GONNA BELIEVE MY PUSSY IS YOUR ROAD TO FREEDOM AGAIN, BECAUSE THAT'S JUST THE KIND OF GUY YOU ARE, ISN'T IT?

...NO...NO... GRETCHEN...

DON'T YOU SAY MY FUCKING NAME!

DON'T YOU FUCKING DARE!

HEY! HEY! WAIT--

NO!

YOU STUPID FUCKING BITCH!

BACK THE HELL AWAY FROM ME, BASTARD, OR YOU'LL FOLLOW HIM OUT...

DON'T GO PISSING YOUR PANTIES NOW, TAO'LL STILL GET HIS VICTIM...HE'LL FUCKING LIVE...

"...FOR A FEW MORE DAYS, AT LEAST."

Nice work... wrapped me up for Tao like a Christmas present...

Can't move... can't think...

Can't stop seeing my worst nightmares over and over in my head...

Right before I finally do pass out, I stab myself with one last vision of her...

...and how beautiful she looks in betrayal...

HERE, GRAB HIS LEGS...MAKE SURE YOU DON'T TOUCH ANY --

COLE...

GET *OUTTA* HERE, LYNCH... I'M *SERIOUS.*

HEY, *FUCK OFF!* THAT FREAK GOT INSIDE ME! HE MADE ME--

MADE YOU SHOOT *ME*... IF *ANYONE* SHOULD BE MAD, I'D THINK IT'D BE ME.

SO, YOU'RE JUST GOING TO WALLOW IN *SELF-PITY*, THEN? IS *THAT* THE PLAN?

AND YET HERE YOU ARE NAVEL-GAZING LIKE SOME TEENAGER...THAT'S *NOT* THE MAN I'VE KNOWN HALF MY LIFE...

AND WHAT *IS?*

THAT MAN, HE'D WANT *REVENGE.* I KNOW JUST HOW HE CAN GET IT.

Brubaker*Phillips*Strachan*Leigh*Quinn*Dunbier